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ABSTRACT

The effect of institutions on school effectiveness is explored in this book, which argues that school reforms in the United States are destined to fail because of the failure to address the root of the problem, which is found in the institutions of direct democratic control by which schools have traditionally been governed. Methodology involved analysis of two data sets: the High School and Beyond (HSB) survey conducted in 1980 and 1982 and the Administrator and Teacher Survey (ATS) conducted in 1984. The HSB survey elicited responses from 30,030 sophomores in 1980 and 28,240 seniors in 1982 from 532 public and private schools. The ATS survey was administered to 10,370 teachers and 402 principals in a subsample of 402 HBS schools, eliciting response rates of 86 and 76 percent, respectively. Findings indicate that schools with effective organizational characteristics perform better; that school autonomy is the most important prerequisite for school effectiveness; and that the existing public education system inhibits the emergence of effective organizations and stifles student achievement. A recommendation is made to implement a new system based on parent/student choice and school competition to promote school autonomy. Six chapters discuss the root of the problem, an institutional perspective on schools, effective school organization, causes of student achievement, institutional context and school organization, and school choice. Notes accompany each chapter. Appendices contain data from the two surveys, measures and indicators, special issues in modeling student achievement, and achievement and organization in public schools. (LMI)

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